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- III. Solo Recital: Thursday, March 5, 2015, 7:30pm., Recital Hall. “Youkali,” “J’attends un navire,” “Wie lange noch?,” “Come up from the Fields, Father” (Kurt Weill); “Tom Sails Away” (Charles Ives); “Le disparu,” “Bleuet,” “C,” “Fêtes galantes” (Francis Poulenc); Ariettes Oubliées (Claude Debussy); Cabaret Songs (Benjamin Britten); “Waldseligkeit,” “Selige Nacht,” “Hat dich die Liebe berührt” (Joseph Marx).
- IV. D.M.A. Research Project. CROSSING OVER: EXAMINING THE CHALLENGES OF A CLASSICALLY TRAINED FEMALE PERFORMING MUSIC THEATER REPERTOIRE. This document explores the pedagogy of a classically trained singer as well as that of a music theater performer examining similarities and differences. Musical examples are referenced throughout. A discussion of style of the megamusical and the 21st century musical provides context. A final chapter on repertoire suitable for bridging the styles provides a reference for the teacher and singer.

CROSSING OVER: EXAMINING THE CHALLENGES OF A
CLASSICALLY TRAINED FEMALE PERFORMING
MUSIC THEATER REPERTOIRE

by

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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation, written by Bridget Maureen Moriarty, has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Can a classically trained female successfully perform music theater repertoire? If one is trained extensively in the classical technique, can she also perform music theater repertoire in a successful manner? What defines classical training? What defines music theater training? What constitutes a successful performance in the music theater style? What constitutes a successful performance in the classical style? When a music theater singer chooses to perform a work in the classical style, the expectations are such that the performer not only sings pitches and rhythms accurately, with impeccable diction, but that the performance of the piece is appropriate to the style of the composition. The same is true for a classical singer who wishes to perform a work in the music theater style. This paper aims to answer these questions and provide a resource for the singer as well as the teacher of both styles.

This study is important for two reasons. In recent years, teachers of singing have benefitted from research establishing a different use of the vocal mechanism in Contemporary Commercial Music (CCM) from that which is seen in classical vocal production. Consequently, pedagogues are learning more about the vocal demands of singers entering the CCM field. Secondly, performers with classically-centered training may choose to pursue alternative vocal styles as an area of interest, to find more professional opportunities, or to change career paths altogether. Through researching the

current trends in music theater pedagogy along with current performance practice of specified music theater genres, I aim to distinguish the differences while establishing the similarities between the two singing styles proving that a classical singer can successfully perform music theater repertoire.

Singers may choose to explore other genres for a multitude of reasons. For some, it is a hobby, an opportunity to branch out and try something different. For others, it is to supplement their training for professional needs, be they academic or performance-based. For still others, learning and performing music in a genre outside of their area of training is reinvigorating and may even build upon the existing technique while incorporating new ideas.

For these reasons, among others, classically trained singers are exploring the genres within CCM, specifically music theater. The technique acquired in the classically-centered training may be of benefit to those looking to cross over into music theater. The foundations of a solid classical technique may then become the foundations of a solid music theater technique. The singer need only be able to open herself up to the differences in production once the foundation is established to begin exploring music theater performance. To best define and describe these differences, this study seeks to define objective measures of success for the classical singer as well as the music theater performer, and to draw connections between the two styles.

When a singer chooses to explore another genre, she may think an entirely new technique is necessary to be successful. On the other hand, she may feel that no change in technique is necessary, and therefore all of the singing is produced in the same manner.

For a singer with classical training who wants to understand the music theater genre, neither way of thinking is accurate. There are elements of classical training that directly benefit the music theater performer. However, there is a modicum of new technique to learn and apply to the successful performance of music theater repertoire. Defining successful singing in both the music theater and classical styles provides clarity to the similarities and differences.

For the purposes of this paper, a classical singer is anyone with at least four years of concentrated classically-based vocal training, whether at the undergraduate collegiate level, during a graduate or young artist program, or in a private studio. The classical singer utilizes the techniques of classical vocal production, including, but not limited to: alignment, respiration, phonation, resonance, and articulation. The classical singer in this sense may have exposure to music theater, but no prominent performance history, or training, in the style.

Successful performance will be defined by a set of objective parameters assigned to performance of classical music as well as to performance of music theater. Success, in this paper, is not determined by a career on Broadway or a national tour but rather by committing to the techniques developed by established music theater professionals and training programs.

Broadway music director Dominick Amendum can often tell if a singer has classical training while sitting at the audition table:

There are certainly some unicorns that can sing all the way through and are comfortable with a high belt and with a coloratura soprano sound, but they are few and far between. In auditions when I hear a singer I'll often look over their

head shot and resume and nine times out of ten my hunch is correct that they have opera training. I find that to be a little more true with the female singers. It's easier for me to tell with the female singers than with the male singers also because with the current demands on females in music theater and the focus on high belting, I think that's a harder transition for a classically trained (female) than for a classically trained tenor.¹

For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to focus on two specific genres of music theater repertoire: the megamusical and the 21st century musical. These genres provide a smaller focus in the larger picture of music theater literature. The megamusical provides three of the longest running Broadway musicals in history (*Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Misérables*, and *Cats*), along with accessible roles for the classically trained singer, while the 21st century musical allows a look into the trends currently on Broadway. As the 21st century musical is a genre that is developing as of the writing of this paper, I will specifically focus on the musicals that most closely relate to the styles of music theater from which they evolved, providing a possible avenue into music theater style for the classically trained female.

The megamusical is defined in the book of the same name by Jessica Sternfeld as featuring “a grand plot from a [sic] historical era, high emotions, singing and music throughout, and impressive sets.”² Megamusicals came about in the 1970s and 1980s, as European imports. The traditional list of these shows include Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil's *Les*

¹ Dominick Amendum, video conference with author, Syracuse, NY, December 30, 2014.

² Jessica Sternfeld, *The Megamusical* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 5.

Misérables. More recent iterations of the megamusical are Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahren's *Ragtime*, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*.

The 21st century musical provides a current snapshot of trends on Broadway. Examples of this genre include Duncan Sheik's *Spring Awakening*, Tom Kitt and Brian Yorkey's *Next to Normal*, and Jason Robert Brown's *The Last Five Years*. The vocal writing is driven by the styles heard on the radio in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.

'Jukebox musicals' use the music of popular artists, such as Green Day's *American Idiot*, Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons' *Jersey Boys*, or a myriad of artists from the 1980s in *Rock of Ages*. For shows set in a different time period, like *Hairspray*, the vocal writing is meant to evoke the style of those times (the 1960s).

The musicals of Rodgers & Hammerstein, Rodgers & Hart, Gershwin, Berlin, and Porter, among others, were composed with classically trained singers in mind. Though revivals of these early book musicals are evolving with the current trends in vocal production, this genre has a more direct correlation between classical singing technique and the music theater repertoire. A more thorough investigation into these current trends is outside of the scope of this research.

Articles, lectures, and presentations at conventions such as the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), or the annual voice symposium "Care of the Professional Voice," along with dissertations written on subjects relating to crossover singing (performing in a variety of vocal styles) and female belting provide a foundation upon which I have built my research. I incorporate these aspects, but direct my focus specifically to the female singer with an already established classical technique who

wishes to sing in the music theater style, and what techniques and knowledge she needs to be successful. The perspective of addressing the classically trained singer provides opportunities to investigate the music theater style as well as the pedagogy involved therein.

A special focus on vocal demands and style is necessary for defining a successful performer in either genre. I will discuss a developed list of objective parameters by which to define a successful singer of classical style as well as a successful singer of music theater style. Using these parameters, I will discuss what a classical singer has learned (the known), and what the budding music theater performer needs to know (the unknown). I will describe vocally and stylistically what adjustments must be made in order to successfully perform music theater repertoire with a focus on performance practice and the specific demands placed on the singer. Interviews conducted with teachers of CCM at various university programs, and music directors on and off Broadway provide insight into the current trends in teaching, the needs of the singer, and the struggles of the performer. The final chapter provides repertoire for the teacher and singer to study as a means of bridging the gap between classical music and music theater repertoire.

CHAPTER II

OBJECTIVE MEASURES

In a subjective field such as singing, objective parameters by which to gauge the singer are used daily in the teaching studio. For the classical singer, these measures have long been defined by pedagogues of the past and adopted and codified by teachers of today. The vocal production and stylistic expectations of the classical singer have been relatively consistent over the last one hundred years. Music theater is a relatively young genre when compared to classical singing, and as such the vocal production and stylistic expectations have changed dramatically in the last fifty years. Music theater contains sub genres influenced by popular music from the 1940s through today and as a result, a standard of music theater performance is in a constant state of development in an effort to keep up. What remains regardless of style is the foundation of a solid vocal technique free of extraneous tension that may cause vocal damage. This chapter seeks to establish these foundations for the classical singer and music theater performer.

The descriptions and definitions described herein are written in my own words based upon my perspectives, beliefs, and experiences from teaching, performing, and observing. Supplemental information was developed through comparisons of the writings of established pedagogues Barbara Doscher, Meribeth Bunch Dayme, William Vennard, Richard Miller, and Scott McCoy among others.

Through history, there has been an accepted set of measurements by which we gauge the success of a classical singer. These include posture, respiration, support, phonation, resonance, registration, articulation, and expression or style. These same techniques considered to be the foundational aspects of classical singing are in many ways the foundational aspects of music theater performance. Posture, respiration, support, and phonation are all very similar and in many ways identical. Rebecca Karpoff, Instructor of Voice at Syracuse University's Department of Drama, feels the foundation of a music theater technique comes from the foundation of a classical technique:

I think the principles of resonance, the principles of when and how you raise and lower your soft palate, and lower your throat, and leave your tongue flat, that's classical technique and it feeds right over into musical theater. (The) technique of breathing and understanding the relationship between your diaphragm, and your ribcage, and your abdominals, that comes from a classical technique.³

Kenneth Lee, Adjunct Associate Professor of Music at Elon University, agrees and provides the same foundational technique to all students:

Every student, whether they're a classical student or a music theater student, is going to receive the same basic training for breathing, resonance, register blending and making sure that you have a smooth vocal line. So all the training is essentially the same at the beginning and really throughout. There's just a point where the paths split and there are different needs.⁴

³ Rebecca Karpoff, interviewed by author, Syracuse, NY, November 29, 2014.

⁴ Kenneth Lee, interviewed by the author, Greensboro, NC, December 17, 2014.

The techniques begin to diverge between the two styles in the areas of resonance, registration, range, articulation, and expression/style. In this chapter I explore each parameter in regards to the classical singer and the music theater performer.

Alignment

Alignment is addressed in nearly every published book on how to sing or on the teaching of singing. Pedagogues agree that standing in a manner that supports the body and is free of excessive tension is an important foundational aspect of successful singing. The differences lie in the descriptions of a free, supported body, and the manner in which we find this proper alignment. A successful singer stands free of excessive tension. The head is aligned over the spine, shoulders are down and back, and knees are loose, not locked. Feet are shoulder-hip width apart, with weight distributed evenly between both feet. This description is for the singer who is standing comfortably in preparation to sing. When singers must move and sing at the same time, as in an opera or musical, the alignment and freedom from excessive tension is equally as important. Positioning of the head, shoulders, and freedom in the knees is the same as when the singer is standing still. It is important for a singer to be able to move about whilst singing in a free manner, and then be able to realign the posture without negatively impacting the alignment while remaining stationary.

For many music theater professionals, dance has long been a part of their training. It is up to the individual performer to find the best balance when singing and dancing simultaneously, but when it comes to the singing, the aforementioned description will provide the most success for the music theater performer.

Improper alignment can have an adverse effect on respiration, phonation, resonance, articulation, or expression. Beginning with a firm foundation allows singers to establish a mode of success for the rest of their singing. Singing Voice Specialist and Voice Pathologist Wendy DeLeo LeBorgne considers all singers “vocal athletes,”⁵ and any singer attempting to perform with a posture in any way out of alignment is going to encounter issues at some point in the singing.

Respiration

Meribeth Bunch Dayme describes quiet respiration in her book *Dynamics of the Singing Voice* as follows:

Quiet respiration, which occurs at rest or during minimal bodily activity, requires little physical energy and is a reflex action. For stage performance more air, and therefore, more physical energy, are necessary, and efficient breathing must initially become a conscious or voluntary act.⁶

Bunch Dayme is describing what Scott McCoy refers to as the subconscious process of oxygenating the blood and cleansing it of excess carbon dioxide to maintain life.⁷

Though a more scientific and functional description, this same process becomes a conscious act for the singer who requires more air be sent through the vocal folds in order to begin the process of phonation.

⁵ Karen Hall, *So You Want to Sing Music Theater - A Guide for Professionals* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 41.

⁶ M. Bunch Dayme, *Dynamics of the Singing Voice*, 5th ed. (New York: SpringerWien, 2009), 64.

⁷ Scott McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View*, 2nd ed. (Delaware, OH: Inside View Press, 2012), 80.

Karpoff describes breathing as an integral part to the character of a music theater performer. The singer must understand how the character would breathe before attempting to portray that character. She explains:

(W)e breathe well when we're committed. So if I am disciplining a child, it's a state of heightened emotion for me. I think about what I'm going to say, I breathe in well to say it, and I measure my words and I give that out. And that's where we have to be when we're on stage in a musical. Nobody comes to see a musical about making egg salad sandwiches. We come to see musicals because there's something heightened that's going on, there's an emotional content there. I think that acting and breathing go absolutely hand in hand. How are you going to breathe in this measure before you come in? What are you thinking? What is motivating that breath? And if we worked on breath technique, from the technical standpoint, your diaphragm, your ribs, then we know we have to engage those things, which we do anyway in normal life. It's only when we go to sing that we screw ourselves all up.⁸

The successful singer inhales free of excessive tension in the neck or larynx. The abdominals are unengaged, the ribs expand, and the breath moves in a manner described as middle-low. The chest is comfortably high and does not rise excessively. The manner in which a singer inhales, regardless of the tones being produced, must always be free of laryngeal tension and abdominal engagement. When the performer allows any element of the inhalation to suffer, the breath, and therefore the singing, suffers. Even in moments of heightened emotion, most active human beings breathe deeply and rather quietly. Gasping for breath does not portray an active emotion in any performer (only excessive laryngeal tension). Efficient inhalations also have a positive impact on the dancing and movement necessitated by each style.

⁸ Karpoff interview, 2014.

Assuming a free inhalation has occurred, the singer must then employ a controlled exhalation to fully support the sound during phonation. For the successful singer, a controlled exhalation engages the abdominals from the bottom-up, while maintaining a comfortably expanded ribcage. The abdominals act in an antagonistic manner to the diaphragm, which contracts during inhalation. In this manner the abdominals work to maintain a sense of inhalation during exhalation. As the abdominals engage, they work consistently to balance the return of the diaphragm in a controlled manner. The chest and ribcage, which were comfortably expanded during inhalation maintain those positions during the controlled exhalation. The breath is then released in a steady and controlled manner allowing for a consistent flow of air to facilitate efficient laryngeal function.

Phonation

When the body is aligned and the process of respiration occurs free from extraneous tension, phonation is the next step in creating a tone for the singer. A successful singer phonates efficiently regardless of the vocal production utilized (belt, mix, 'legit,' etc.); the use of glottal or aspirate onsets are not executed unless for dramatic, expressive or linguistic purposes. The singer coordinates the muscles of respiration with the muscles of phonation for a balanced onset. It is important to know what these muscles are but to not try and manage them. Because of this, the concept of phonation becomes one of sensation to the singer, and any terminology may be applied later, if needed.

McCoy describes balanced phonation as when the adduction of the vocal folds and the movement of air begin at precisely the same instant.⁹ The resulting tone is efficient phonation. This tone is free of strain and without excessive breathiness and is therefore balanced. The singer need not always be aware of the combination of factors that go into efficient phonation; however, she must be aware not to engage unnecessary muscles in order to create sound. The process of describing phonation is up to the individual teacher, and is not the purpose of this paper. However, as a teacher of singing, it is important to know the process of efficient phonation so as to best assess potential problems when students create a tone that may be strained or breathy.

Within the music theater genre, the tone is often referred to as speech-like. A natural use of glottal onsets may be employed for the purpose of maintaining a conversational tone. Again, the music theater performer does not consciously control the specific muscles and coordination involved to successfully begin phonation, however, the adduction of the folds and the movement of the air must begin at the same time as it does for the classical singer.

Vibrato

Vibrato is a result of efficient phonation, and is utilized when necessitated by the style. A freely produced vibrato pulsates, on average, five to eight times per second¹⁰ and the pitch may vary by as much as a minor second above and below the central pitch.¹¹ A good vibrato adds harmonic richness to the tone, and gives the impression that a tone is

⁹ McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View*, 113.

¹⁰ Dayme, *Dynamics of the Singing Voice*, 108.

¹¹ McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View*, 5.

centered on the pitch.¹² In certain styles of classical music, as in the Baroque, Renaissance, or in 20th and 21st century writings, vibrato may be employed or withheld for the purposes of ornamentation or style. The successful singer employs a vibrato that is freely produced and appropriate to the style.

For the music theater performer, vibrato is often stylistically withheld until the end of a sustained pitch, especially at the end of a piece. It is important to note that the ability to withhold vibrato is in no way synonymous with tension in the larynx or holding back the breath. A tone without vibrato must not be produced at the expense of breath efficiency. In many styles of music theater, vibrato is appropriate throughout the range and throughout the piece. Just as in Baroque music, vibrato may be utilized as an ornament (a means of expression) in music theater.

Alignment, respiration, phonation, and vibrato are fundamentally the same between classical singers and music theater performers. Any person choosing to sing classical or music theater repertoire will benefit from an introduction to these foundational aspects of singing. Also important is the similarity between the two styles. With respect to these aspects of singing, a classically trained singer may already know a great deal about singing in the music theater style.

Resonance

The following foundational aspects of singing—resonance, registration, articulation, expression/style—mark the greatest departures between the classical singer

¹² Barbara M. Doscher, *The Functional Unity of the Singing Voice*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD & London: The Scarecrow Press, 1994), 199.

and the music theater performer. There will still arise many similarities regarding the vocal process, however, tactics, goals, and uses of musculature will vary.

A successful singer tunes the vocal tract sufficient to produce a sound free of extraneous tension, to be heard consistently throughout the vocal range. Here is another step in the singing process where the singer cannot focus on the musculature, but rather the freedom for dynamic movement within the musculature. Described by Bunch Dayme, “The pharynx makes an unusual resonator component of the system because it is used for something far removed from singing most of the time and is capable of being altered in shape and form.”¹³ The pharynx runs from the base of the skull to the base of the larynx (at the bottom) and is split into three sections. The nasal pharynx spans from the base of the skull down to the soft palate. The oral pharynx is directly below the nasal pharynx, and extends from the soft palate down to the inlet of the larynx. The laryngeal pharynx runs from the inlet of the larynx (epiglottis, aryepiglottic folds, arytenoid cartilages) down to the cricoid cartilage at the bottom.

For the classical singer, the tone produced is free of nasality, except when singing a nasal consonant or vowel ([n], [m], [ŋ], [ã], [õ], etc.), and contains elements of *chiaroscuro* throughout the range. The resulting sound has carrying power, brilliance, and depth. The carrying power is a result of accessing the singer’s formant (a clustering of quality formants three, four, and five), which allows her to be heard over an orchestra, an imperative tool for the classical singer. Without efficient breath or phonation, a singer

¹³ Dayme, *Dynamics of the Singing Voice*, 120.

is less likely to access the singer's formant, thereby negatively impacting the resulting tone.

The tone produced by a music theater performer must be resonant, and consistent throughout the range. Resonance aids in establishing a character. Though amplification is common, if not necessary, for the music theater performer, the singer must provide a tone to be amplified. Without a sense of resonance, the singer will not be able to be amplified or understood.

Many singers employ resonance feedback as a means to assess what are actually muscular adjustments within the larynx. (For some singers, a lack of sensation creates the freest tone, whereas for others, the sensations are felt anywhere from the bridge of the nose, to the top of the head, to the chest, and everywhere in between.) The singer describes sensations of resonance based upon where she experiences the singing. The description will be as individual as the singer herself. However, having a singer describe her experience can provide valuable information to the teacher of singing when trying to describe an action that cannot be seen and is felt differently by each singer.

No one area of the resonators is employed at the exclusion of the other. Resonance equilibrium is vital to the musical tone produced by any singer. The music theater tone is often referred to as speech-like. There are expressive as well as vocal reasons for this description. The music theater performer must successfully go from speech to singing with no perceived difference in the tone. The shape of the vocal tract is

similar in speech as it is in music theater singing;¹⁴ maintaining the vocal tract shape found during speech achieves the tone desired by many music theater performers, casting directors, and audiences. Changing the shape of the vocal tract from what is used during speech creates a myriad of different tone qualities, some of which exemplify the *chiaroscuro* desired by teachers and singers of classical music. Rebecca Karpoff describes resonance as a choice made by the singer:

Everything is a choice. If I choose to be more spoken, then I'm not choosing to have more ring in the voice or more of what I would call tonal beauty, what the classical world would call tonal beauty. I'm choosing to sing in a way that would be more direct. So I'm choosing to sacrifice something or I'm not choosing the tonal beauty side, whereas in other music I might make the opposite choice. And there are gradations of that.¹⁵

A shortened vocal tract is found more often in the music theater singer, and is achieved by lifting the larynx, narrowing the pharynx, and/or lowering the soft palate. Vocal tract shape leads to a difference in which harmonics are amplified, however, the three quality formants are still necessary to distinguish a music theater sound and a singer's unique timbre. McCoy observes spectral analysis to reveal strong harmonic overtones as high as 10,000Hz, which is rather different from the classical norm, in which the harmonics above 4,000Hz are much less present¹⁶ (see Figure 1). As a result, music theater performers do not need to access the singer's formant as often as classically trained singers would. The use of amplification and the strong harmonic overtones

¹⁴ Jo Estill, "Belting and Classic Voice Quality: Some Physiological Differences," *Medical Problems of Performing Artists* 3, no. 1 (March 1988): 37-43.

¹⁵ Karpoff Interview, 2014.

¹⁶ McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View*, 155.

associated with belting makes this less of a necessity. Shortening the vocal tract amplifies the second harmonic,¹⁷ which creates a different timbre in the music theater performer (as opposed to a classical tone, which typically amplifies the first harmonic). For this reason, music theater performers must utilize resonance for the sake of amplification, however, not to the degree of a classical singer.

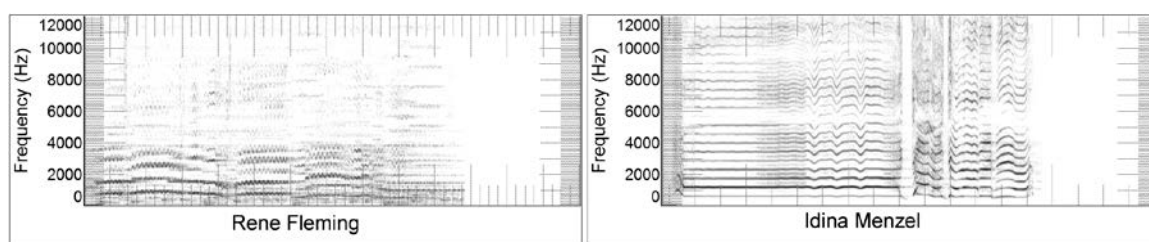


Figure 1. Spectrograms of Typical Classical and Belt Singing.¹⁸

The changes in musculature are not consciously controlled by the singer, and are best achieved when resulting in a freely produced tone in the desired style. The changes in the shape of the vocal tract for the music theater performer that differ from the shapes achieved by the classical singer need not be described to any student by the teacher of singing, so long as the tone produced is free of excessive tension and appropriate to the desired style. The teacher of singing must have a clear knowledge of the differences in muscular function between both styles to best aid the singer in achieving the freely produced tone.

¹⁷ Amy Lebowitz and R.J. Baken, "Correlates of the Belt Voice: A Broader Examination," *Journal of Voice* 25, no. 2 (March 2011): 159-65.

¹⁸ McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View*, 155.

Describing the singing process is as individual as the teacher. These objective parameters aim to clarify specific aspects of singing for the purposes of clarifying the differences between a classical and music theater vocal production. Shenandoah University Associate Professor of Voice and Musical Theatre Specialist Matt Edwards emphasizes this point:

If you pick up the Stark book on Bel Canto, you realize that [the book] even says there is no codified technique. You look at the intro to Lamperti's book, he says there's no codified technique. You look at Richard Miller, he says there's no codified technique. You pick up *Great Singers on Great Singing*, they all disagree. There's a few commonalities but some of them say 'don't think about breathing.' Marilyn Horne says breathe all the way into your butt. You have everything in between.¹⁹

The impact of this statement provides the need for clarification within individual techniques. This paper in no way aims to codify one specific technique for singing in any genre, rather, it aims to provide perspective and a basis of foundation for a classical singer looking to explore music theater technique.

Registration

For the classical singer, registration comprises the greatest departure from classical technique. As such, a background of vocal fold function is included in registration in preparation of a discussion on belting.

The larynx is a complex area made up of tiny muscles and cartilages working in tandem to function primarily as a valve, to keep food and other foreign matter from entering the trachea, as well as to hold our breath when defecating, lifting something

¹⁹ Matt Edwards, video conference with author, Greensboro, NC, December 12, 2014.

heavy, or during child birth. A secondary function of these muscles is to create pitch. The two main muscle pairs that have the greatest effect on pitch are the thyroarytenoid and the cricothyroid muscles (hereafter referred to as TA and CT, respectively).

Registration can be defined by laryngeal function as well as by resonance feedback. Nineteenth century pedagogue Manuel Garcia defines a register as a series of consecutive and homogeneous tones, produced by the development of the same mechanical principle, and with the same general timbre.²⁰ Bunch Dayme points out “while scientists tend to approach the study of vocal registers as mechanical problems, and voice scientists as an acoustical study, singers are concerned whether the sound is of equal quality and intensity throughout the entire range of pitches.”²¹

A commonly accepted description of registration involves four registers of the voice as defined by vocal fold function including fry, modal voice, falsetto, and whistle. Modal voice is where the singer experiences most of her singing. Within this register the functions of the CT muscle and the TA muscle interchange depending on pitch, intensity, and volume desired. The TA muscles are made up of smaller muscles and the inner most layer is what is referred to as the vocalis. When the TA muscles contract, they make the vocal folds shorter and thicker, resulting in lower pitched singing. The CT muscle functions to tilt the thyroid cartilage down and away from the cricoid cartilage, which results in the stretching of the vocal folds. The vocal folds become longer and thinner as a result. Within modal voice both the CT and TA muscles are engaged; to what degree

²⁰ Ibid., 143.

²¹ Dayme, *Dynamics of the Singing Voice*, 109.

depends upon the desired pitch or quality of sound. For most singers, many pitches can be sung with a CT dominant production or a TA dominant production. These pitches span approximately one octave, however, the octave in question changes as determined by the natural tessitura of the singer.

When many singers discuss registration, they are often describing resonance feedback. Descriptors such as ‘chest voice’ and ‘head voice’ refer to sympathetic vibrations experienced in areas near the head or near the chest. However, when the CT and TA muscles are engaged simultaneously the singer is in modal voice, one of the four registers. These descriptions can work for individuals especially when terminology is consistent among teachers and students. Problems arise when singers and teachers use the same terminology to describe different functions. LeBorgne states

. . . it is important to know what various types of resonance feel like and to understand that these are sympathetic vibrations. When you feel chest resonance, you’re feeling sympathetic vibrations. When you feel resonance in your face, you’re not singing into your face; you’re getting a sympathetic vibration.²²

Some pedagogues are foregoing head and chest terminology for Mode 1 (TA dominant) and Mode 2 (CT dominant). For the purposes of this paper I will define registration by laryngeal function.

For most singers experiencing a head resonant dominant sound, the vocal folds are in a more CT dominant production. The TA is still engaged isometrically acting as an antagonist to the CT, which will become longer and thinner as the pitch rises. For ‘chest

²² Joan Melton, *Singing in Musical Theatre—The Training of Singers and Actors* (New York: Allworth Press, 2007), 22.

voice,’ ‘chest register,’ or more accurately, ‘chest resonant dominant sound,’ the singer is often singing in a TA dominant production; the CT is still engaged to the degree necessary to aid in changing pitch. The singer experiences resonance feedback in different areas of the body, but this is not where the sound takes place or even where the voice resonates. These are the sympathetic vibrations experienced by some singers that result from laryngeal function.

Referring again to Bunch Dayme’s definition, “. . . singers are concerned whether the sound is of equal quality and intensity throughout the entire range of pitches.”²³ The utilization of different registers is determined by the individual singer, and the emotional needs of the performance. A singer is not aware of the minute changes in the CT and TA muscles when ascending or descending in pitch. The successful singer maneuvers through her range with no audible breaks, unless intentionally done. The tone is efficiently produced throughout the range and register shifts are only perceptible at times of emotional need or as necessitated by the character. The need should only reflect the character, and never the lack of technique in the singer.

The rules of registration are the same in a classical production and in a music theater production. The musculature is the same, the vocal registers are the same as defined by laryngeal function, and many singers of both genres describe registration via resonance feedback. Where the two styles depart is in the manner in which the music theater performer disregards the natural action of the vocal folds in and around the *primo passaggio* to produce different types of timbres commonly referred to as the belt, and the

²³ Dayme, *Dynamics of the Singing Voice*, 109.

mix. The function of the vocal folds does not change; however, the manner in which the musculature is employed changes drastically to produce these timbres.

Belting

For most females, there is a natural transition of muscular dominance between C4 and F4.²⁴ Often referred to as the *primo passaggio*, this area is where muscular dominance is shared or exchanged freely between the TA and CT muscles. Singers of both styles possess this transitional area; however, music theater performers may not always observe it. McCoy points out that “women who specialize in belting . . . might learn to continue with Mode 1 [TA dominant] to C5 or even higher.”²⁵

The moment muscular dominance in the larynx normally begins to change is the moment belting becomes a unique vocal production. In classical singing, after passing through the *primo passaggio*, the TA functions isometrically and acts as an antagonist while yielding dominance to the CT. The result is higher pitched singing that maintains a sense of balance and allows the singer to ascend to the top of her range. In belting, the TA’s function below the *passaggio* is brought up through and above, rather than the muscle functioning as an isometric antagonist to the CT. The vocal folds maintain more of their shape and breadth of surface area above the *primo passaggio* than would be found in classical singing. The tone quality changes when the folds are thicker, and this becomes especially apparent at higher pitches. The result is a longer closed quotient, which amplifies different harmonics than found in classical singing, amplifying strong

²⁴ McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View*, 147.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

harmonic overtones as high as 10,000Hz.²⁶ The resulting tone is frequently defined as belting.

As is the case in any vocal production, the belt production requires efficient alignment and respiration without extraneous tension for the voice to work at its best. It is true that belting is a more high-impact vocal production. LeBorgne likens belters to X-Game athletes, and classical singers to Olympic athletes.²⁷ This analogy showcases the high-impact of an X-Game athlete as is seen in a belter, and the long established tradition of peak performance necessitated by an Olympian, or a classical singer. (There is also a secondary reference to the traditional credibility of each sport, in terms of the event's relative age, even though both require great skill.)

I prefer an analogy of collegiate football players to collegiate basketball players; both athletes practice and train to build the muscles to achieve their desired goals, and certain athletes are able to perform in both sports. Football players, like belters, utilize great muscular force very quickly at a high impact rate, but for a short time. Basketball players, like classical singers, train to build the stamina required to endure what is asked of the muscles. Both types of athletes are also aware of the importance of efficient muscular activity within their sport. For a football player to work successfully, they must first learn to stand, walk, run, and eventually to master the more minute muscular efficiency depending upon their position. A wide receiver would train very differently to be a point guard, just as a point guard would train very differently to be a wide receiver.

²⁶ Ibid., 155.

²⁷ Karen Hall *So You Want to Sing Music Theater*, 58.

Subsequently, a classical singer must train differently in order to belt, just as a music theater performer must train differently to sing classically. The functionality of the voice remains a key factor to both singers.

No song is intended to be sung entirely in the belt production. Singers utilize a mix production, which for the music theater performer incorporates more chest resonance than the classical *voce mista* as described by Richard Miller.²⁸ Saying the music theater mix uses more chest resonance is purposely vague. The mix has a number of variations that range from singer to singer based on resonance feedback more so than laryngeal function. (Again, if we based the definition of mix on laryngeal function, all singing in modal voice is a mix. For the purposes of this paper, ‘mix’ is defined by its resonance sensation.) A TA dominant piece such as “Defying Gravity” from Stephen Schwarz’s *Wicked* does not require the singer to utilize the thick vocalis muscle on every single pitch. There are times when the emotions may call for a CT dominant production, or moreover a mixed production. However, at moments of high emotion, the expectation is the singer will belt. It is also important to note many singers utilize a mix that provides the same sense of excitement and energy to the listener as another singer’s belt that both singers may successfully be labeled ‘belters.’

When attempting to define belting, the greatest struggle seems to stem from the terminology. Norman Spivey states that “(p)utting your finger on exactly what the belt sound is may be at the root of many of our divergences.”²⁹ Resonance versus

²⁸ Richard Miller, *Training Soprano Voices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23.

²⁹ Norman Spivey, “Music Theater Singing . . . Let’s Talk. Part 2: Examining the Debate on Belting,” *Journal of Singing* 64, no. 5 (May/June 2008): 607–14.

registration, defining versus describing, both of these concepts lead to confusion amongst teachers and singers. A teacher can describe belting or a music theater tone in any manner that makes sense to that teacher and more importantly, the student. Defining belting based upon resonance feedback detracts from the changes within the musculature of the larynx. Teachers of classical singing need not describe a tone as TA or CT dominant in order to achieve the appropriate sound. Such is the case for a music theater performer, or teacher; the muscular balance in belting is different than that of the music theater mix, or CT dominant singing, and must be treated as such. Neil Semer states:

(w)e have direct control over muscles, not sound waves. Good placement (as well as fine artistry) is the positive but passive result of coordinated muscular and skeletal function controlled by a discerning ear, good proprioceptive sense (sensual awareness of one's body) and fine artistic impulses.³⁰

Spivey collected nearly 50 references and definitions of belting from published literature through 2008. The complete article is filled with quotes from those in favor of the style and those adamantly against it. From that research, Spivey compiled physical and acoustic traits of the belt production as described and defined by pedagogues and researchers. To summarize his research, belting involves a great amount of energy and muscular support, a higher laryngeal position, TA-dominant production, long closed quotient, narrow pharynx, forward tongue, and a laterally spread mouth. The results of these physical traits lead to a loud sound, rich in high overtones, that seems forward, is

³⁰ Neil Semer, "Musical Theatre Singing for the Classical Singer," *Classical Singer Magazine* 17, no. 1 (January 2004): 1, accessed November 8, 2014, from <http://www.classicalsinger.com/magazine/article.php?id=656>

stronger at a higher range, and is speech-like.³¹ Edwards defines belting from the singing actor's perspective:

It should be actor driven, it should be exciting, it should be impressive, it should be intense, it should be emotionally connected. If we think about it, it's a heightened emotion, you're trying to make somebody do something or be very intense, so it should follow that. It should sound like speech as you go up into that place [the belt production].³²

Articulation

The voice is built like any other instrument; however, it includes a unique element in the use of articulators. These allow the singer to form clear vowels, clear consonants, and perform with expression through the use of the text without adding extraneous tension. Text consists of vowels and consonants and it is the job of all singers to produce each clearly, efficiently, and beautifully. Vowels are formed by the position of the arch of the tongue in relation to the roof of the mouth.

The successful classical singer tunes vowels for the purpose of greatest resonance. Vowels will be rounder than in speech and modified in specific areas of the voice as necessitated by the singer. For certain vowels, the lips will round to elongate the oral cavity ([u], [o], etc.). The successful music theater performer tunes vowels for the purpose of greatest resonance for amplification. Vowels are speech-like, which creates a more forward quality in the tone, and modified in specific areas of the voice as necessitated by the singer.

³¹ Spivey, "Music Theater Singing . . . Let's Talk," 611.

³² Edwards Interview, 2014.

The position of the arch of the tongue separates the oral pharynx from the oral cavity. The tongue is an important component of vowel formation as well as resonance. Employing only the tongue and lips for the formation of vowels implies a lack of excessive tension in the jaw and lips for non-rounded vowels.

Modifying vowels away from their natural speech-like production is utilized most often towards the extremes of the range for many classical singers in order to maintain a resonant singing quality and to consistently access the singer's formant. Music theater performers modify vowels most often in the belt or mix production at the extremes of the range to be understood as well as for vocal necessity. Modification occurs by opening or closing the vowels depending on the needs of the singer, the text, the pitch, and the individual voice. The result is an approximation of a vowel, placing trust in the listener to successfully understand the text. No two singers go about modification in the same exact manner, as no two voices are built exactly the same way.

Consonants are formed with the tongue, teeth, and lips; therefore a modicum of freedom is implied in the successful production. If vowels are produced efficiently on a steady stream of breath through a resonant tube, the articulators work to create consonants that sufficiently break up the vowels, never at the expense of either consonant or vowel. Excessive tension in the jaw, tongue, lips, or extrinsic laryngeal muscles will impede the clarity of the consonant and likely the beauty of the vowel. The text must be easily understood and clarity achieved in many different languages and dialects. For the classical singer, a sense of legato is achieved through the vowel-to-vowel connection without allowing the consonants to stop the flow of air. A clear legato line assists with

the crossing over of registers, and a smooth transition between registers assists with a legato line.

The New Grove defines legato as “connected smoothly, with neither a perceptible break in the sound nor (ordinarily) special emphasis . . . Legato is one of the main necessities for *bel canto* singing.”³³ Native English speakers do not speak with elongated vowels. Depending on the region, many dialects of American English swallow consonants, or drop them all together. What is a non-legato speech pattern becomes a non-legato singing pattern for the music theater performer. It comes across as rather unnatural to elongate every vowel in a music theater piece (in fact, the result is a rather ‘classical’ sound). With this in mind, the music theater performer must maintain the speech-like quality not only in the shape of the vowel, but in the production of the text. The singer needs to sound as though she were speaking on pitch, and with that comes a non-legato production.

Expression/Style

Singing is an expression of human experience and emotion through which the performer must strive to present a connection to the audience. The connection sought is an individual endeavor, and the means with which a singer aims to connect can be determined by the style of music as well as by the performer. The need to make a connection is the same. The manner in which the performer focuses on the expression of that connection differs.

³³ Geoffrey Chew. “Legato.” *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16290>.

For the classical singer, singing expressively begins with the beauty of the tone, appropriateness of the musical style and period in musical history, the connection to the character, and the clarity of text. In opera productions of the past, the text was often the least important factor when it came to singing expressively. Vowels would be modified beyond recognition, consonants lost, but as long as a pure and beautiful tone remained the singer was considered successful. This time has passed and clarity of text is becoming more important.

The HD MET Live Broadcasts bring opera to a wider audience. With cameras that close-up on the singers, the sense of character and expression are more important than ever before. Though beauty of tone is still the most important factor for a classical singer, more emphasis is placed upon a connection to a character, the look of a character, and the sound of a character.

The successful music theater performer must perform with a commitment to the text first, and above all else, whether it is in the dialogue or in the sung lyric. Without a connection to the text, many professionals in the field feel there is no use to someone singing music theater repertoire. Jeannette LoVetri states “Act, tell the story, or nobody’s interested. You will go nowhere.”³⁴ Rebecca Karpoff connects breathing with intention allowing the singer a technical approach to the character. Syracuse University Professor of Practice Brian Cimmet feels what lacks most in young music theater performers is a connection to the lyric.³⁵ If a singer cannot express or experience what the lyricist has

³⁴ Melton, *Singing in Musical Theatre*, 63.

³⁵ Brian Cimmet, interviewed by author, Syracuse, NY, November 29, 2014.

placed in front of her, the performer will never connect with an audience. If a singer cannot connect with an audience, then for whom is she performing?

Many music theater programs at colleges and universities place a strong emphasis on acting and singing at the same time. Lee explains:

Casting directors in master classes say to students ‘Let’s see you act.’ And the student immediately panics because they think that they have to throw their technique completely away. But it’s a matter of making sure that you know how to use your voice in a way that sounds natural while you act.³⁶

Though a foundation in vocal technique is essential to the success of any singer, a music theater performer must put in the time and effort in understanding the character. Methods on how a classical singer can do this will be discussed in chapter three.

In brief, a successful music theater performer sings in a style appropriate to the composer. The text is presented in a natural, speech-like manner. The character of the song is a synthesized unit with the voice of the singer. The acting influences the singing, and the singing influences the acting.

To be successful at singing expressively, singers in any style must be aware of the period and style of the work. Attention must be given to composer’s markings in the score, and an understanding of style demonstrated in the performance. For example, one cannot sing Fauré with the same use of rubato as one would in Strauss based upon the established performance practice from our understanding of the composers’ intentions.

³⁶ Lee Interview, 2014.

The same holds true for a singer attempting to perform Andrew Lloyd Webber in the same style as Jason Robert Brown.

Rebecca Karpoff describes different styles as existing within individual boxes. These boxes with clearly defined edges allow a singer to explore the full boundaries of the box, every corner, maybe even push the edges, but she cannot go outside of the box or else she is no longer within the appropriate style. Karpoff explains: “And that’s where I think classical singers singing musical theater, they don’t get it. It’s like they bring the wrong box . . . But if you want to sing this [music theater] then you have to understand it’s a different box. Just as I would if it were the other way around.”³⁷

After exploring each parameter, the interrelated nature of individual aspects of singing becomes apparent. Inefficient respiration affects phonation and resonance, which can inform articulators and the resulting tone suffers. Posture affects phonation, which affects articulation, which affects tone. The balance of these areas is what leads to the success of any singer.

Having identified objective parameters by which to measure a classical singer and apply these same principles to the music theater performer, I will continue with a specific comparison of the similarities and differences that appeared within this chapter, and explain more clearly what a classical singer or teacher of singing needs to know in order to successfully perform music theater repertoire.

³⁷ Karpoff Interview, 2014.

CHAPTER III

COMPARISON OF TECHNIQUE

All singing is a portrayal of human emotion at its peak. Whether it be opera, art song, any genre of music theater or any genre for that matter, a singer is presenting a momentary glimpse into the human experience. Regardless of the style, the foundations of vocal success are the same regarding a freely produced tone, however unique that tone may be. These foundations in vocal technique allow singers of all styles to maintain a healthy and sustainable instrument. These parameters describe a successful singer in a live setting such as a voice lesson, stage performance, or concert/cabaret. At no point am I attempting to compare live singing to that which is recorded in a studio, produced, and released commercially.

For every difference, there will still be means of comparison. The physical act of singing is the same for anyone who produces a vocal tone. As with any instrument there is an actuator, a vibrator, and a resonator. What a singer does with the tone during resonance often creates the greatest difference.

As mentioned, posture, respiration, support, and phonation are all fundamentally the same for every successful singer. The differences arise when the character requires a music theater performer to alter her stance or posture. Edwards explains, “in the 1950s people stood up tall. They didn’t slouch forward. They were a little more formal. And women had been through training. If we jump over to [Jonathan Larson’s] *Rent*, their

posture needs to change, as we get more casual then their neck is going to move a little bit.”³⁸ Though contemporary staging and composition of opera is employing more physicalized characters, the comparatively recent tradition in music theater has been to completely embody a character, perhaps at the expense of the singing.

Apart from the changes that exist due to character expectations between classical and music theater singing, the first major delineation occurs in the area of resonance. A successful classical singer and music theater performer tunes the vocal tract sufficient to naturally amplify the voice. For the classical singer, resonance is a necessity in order to be heard over an orchestra. For the music theater performer, resonance aids in establishing a character, and provides the tone to be amplified by a microphone. The nature of resonance sought and the manner in which it is sought are two of the elements that differentiate the styles.

The classical singer aims to access the singer’s formant, which provides the singer with carrying power to be heard over an orchestra. Music theater performers utilize quality formants three, four, and five, but to a different degree. A music theater performer can produce harmonic overtones as high as 10,000Hz,³⁹ contributing to the music theater sound described as bright, forward, or brassy. The differences in the harmonics that are amplified by a classical singer versus a music theater performer also contribute to the different tonal qualities, overtones, and resonance strategies of the individual singer.

³⁸ Edwards Interview, 2014.

³⁹ McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View*, 155.

For a classical singer, a low laryngeal position, a wide and relaxed pharyngeal position, and a raised soft palate are the ideal norm in creating a freely produced tone, and therefore achieving the ‘ring.’ The music theater performer must have a flexible laryngeal position, the ability to narrow the pharynx, a wider mouth position, and potential for a lowered soft palate. These characteristics create the signature music theater sound often described as brassy, consistently (for some exclusively) forward, and speech-like. Once the tone is produced in either style, the manner of articulation, as well as tension in the jaw or tongue, can have a negative impact on the freedom in the tone.

Not every pitch is sung with a raised larynx or a constricted pharynx in the music theater repertoire. Many styles of music theater warrant a more classical vocal production as would be found in the musicals of Rodgers & Hammerstein or Gershwin. Even in more contemporary musicals, such as *The Phantom of the Opera*, or *Les Misérables*, certain roles require a classical approach to the vocal production. The role of Cathy in Jason Robert Brown’s *The Last Five Years* may sing with a lowered laryngeal position, or a wide pharynx, depending on the vocal color she is seeking as a part of her character. The music theater performer must be able to flexibly and functionally utilize the vocal tract to produce the tone that best fits the character and the desired sound. Singers must be able to adjust resonance (navigate between TA and CT dominant productions) through optimal tuning of formants, in ways that accentuate tonal brilliance without excessive laryngeal stress.⁴⁰ The functionality should never be at the expense of

⁴⁰ Ibid., 156.

vocal health. It is a different training of the musculature. While discussing belting, McCoy states the foundational parallels between the two styles: “As in classical singing, proper breath support and appropriate release of tension from extrinsic laryngeal, tongue and jaw muscles are paramount.”⁴¹

Edwards advocates a flexible laryngeal position to facilitate the most functional vocal production.⁴² In music theater singing often the larynx rises with ascending pitch. As singers move beyond the *primo passaggio* where modification begins in a classical production, maintaining the speech-like vowels renders a shorter vocal tract, supported by a higher laryngeal position. This amplifies higher harmonics than in a classical production, and leads to the aforementioned music theater tone. The shorter vocal tract has the acoustic effect of raising the frequency of all formants, which brightens the projected sound.⁴³

Vowel modification is utilized to allow a classical singer to maintain a resonant tone throughout her range, so as best to be heard over an orchestra. The formation of vowels with the arch of the tongue in relationship to the roof of the mouth and the teeth create two resonating tubes—one in the oral pharynx, the other in the oral cavity. Adjusting the shapes of these tubes as pitches ascend or descend provides the greatest amplification of the singer’s voice. The music theater performer must not only utilize microphones for amplification, she must remain conversational in her tone. For this reason music theater performers will not modify vowels to the same degree as a classical

⁴¹ Ibid., 156.

⁴² Edwards Interview, 2014.

⁴³ McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View*, 156.

singer, specifically above the passaggio, and as a result the tone remains speech-like, and is still able to be picked up through a microphone.

Likely the biggest difference for classically trained females versus females performing music theater repertoire is the concept of the belt production. As discussed in chapter two, belting can be defined via laryngeal function as well as by resonance feedback. Some classical teachers even compare the physical act of belting to a tenor singing at the top of his range. The longer closed quotient, sense of support and airflow, and resulting brighter tone are strong similarities between the two productions.

A successful music theater belter does not perform an entire song within a belt production. The music theater performer must be flexible to sing through different areas of resonance just as a classical soprano must be flexible to sing in and out of the TA dominant production at the beginning of Mozart's "Come scoglio" (see Figure 2).

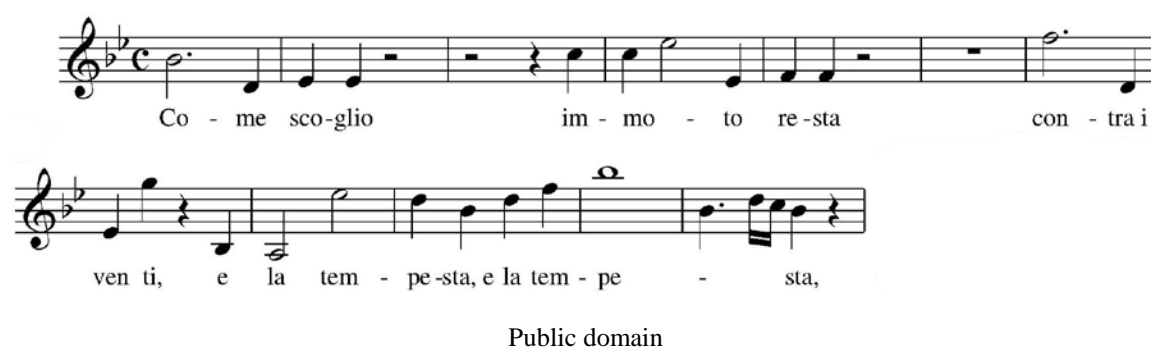


Figure 2. "Come scoglio" m. 3-14 from *Così fan tutte*.⁴⁴

Note that the soprano must navigate from F5 down to D4, back up to G5 and immediately to B3 flat followed by A3, E5 flat, and finally ascending to B5 flat in eleven

⁴⁴ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Così fan tutte*, piano reduction (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1819) 59.

bars. A soprano who ignores the TA dominant resonance in this example will not be vocally successful in her performance of Mozart's aria. The same vocal flexibility is also seen in Schwartz's *Wicked*, within the song "Defying Gravity" (see Figure 3). The first time Elphaba sings the titular phrase the text and dramatic arc indicate a lighter production as is utilized by many actresses in this role (it also provides a vocal means of growth, determination, and decision making for the character).



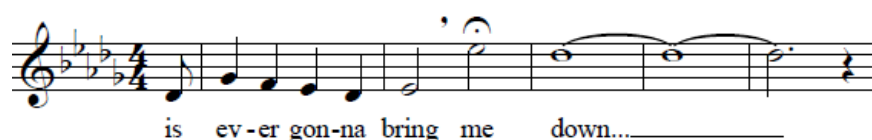
Defying Gravity
 from the Broadway Musical WICKED
 Music and Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz
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Figure 3. "Defying Gravity" m. 22-29 from *Wicked*.⁴⁵

The vocal productions utilized in the two examples are similar in their pitch class, as well as their need for flexibility. Though the second example utilizes more TA dominant production throughout and the first utilizes more CT, both require accessibility in each production. Each successive time the titular phrase appears in "Defying Gravity," Elphaba has become more determined in her decision and the same phrase is sung in a

⁴⁵ Steven Schwartz, "Defying Gravity," In *The Singers Musical Theatre Anthology Volume 5 Mezzo-Soprano/Belter*, edited by Richard Walters (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2008), 281.

TA dominant belt or belt-mix production. This vocal quality is then carried through to the end of the song where the singer must sustain D5 flat after singing E5 flat as well as an optional F5. The same pitch class seen in Mozart becomes a very different sound in music theater. The commitment to the text and the needs of the character indicate the necessity of a different vocal production (see Figure 4).



Defying Gravity
 from the Broadway Musical WICKED
 Music and Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz
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Figure 4. “Defying Gravity” m. 125-130 from *Wicked*.⁴⁶

Most classically trained females cross through the passaggio from TA dominant into CT dominant production in the area of C4 to F4.⁴⁷ The ascending line seen here in Claude Debussy’s “L’Ombre des Arbres” (see Figure 5) renders a mixture of CT and TA dominant productions. The D4 sharp lies within the *primo passaggio* and the singer must maneuver in and out of this area throughout the phrase.

This same range sung by a music theater performer in the song “Always True To You” from *Kiss Me Kate* (Figure 6) is performed in a belt or belt mix production. The same pitch class in the song “But Not For Me” from *Girl Crazy* (Figure 7) would not be

⁴⁶ Steven Schwartz, “Defying Gravity,” In *The Singers Musical Theatre Anthology Volume 5 Mezzo-Soprano/Belter*, edited by Richard Walters (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2008), 273.

⁴⁷ McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View*, 147.

belted but would be sung in a TA dominant mix. And finally, the same pitch class in the song “If I Loved You” from *Carousel* (Figure 8) is sung in a CT dominant production, however with a different sense of vowel and articulation from the classical singer. If a singer wonders how to decide in which vocal production to sing these pitches, one must only look to the text and the character. The use of resonance and registration for the music theater performer is completely driven by the character.

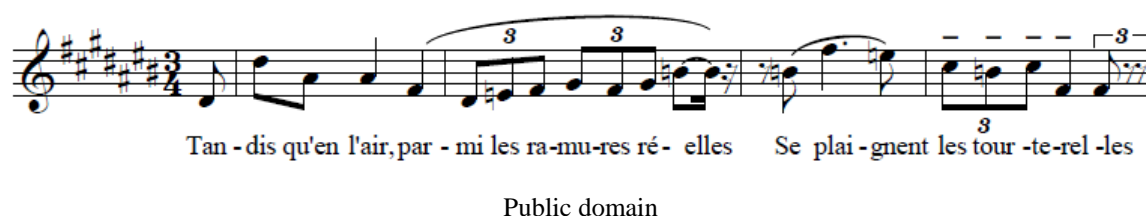


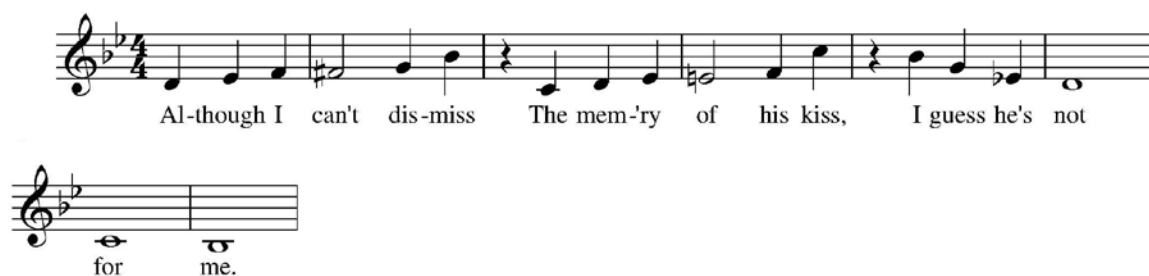
Figure 5. “L’Ombre des Arbres” m. 6-10 from *Ariettes Oubliées*.⁴⁸



Figure 6. “Always True To You” m. 105-115 from *Kiss Me Kate*.⁴⁹

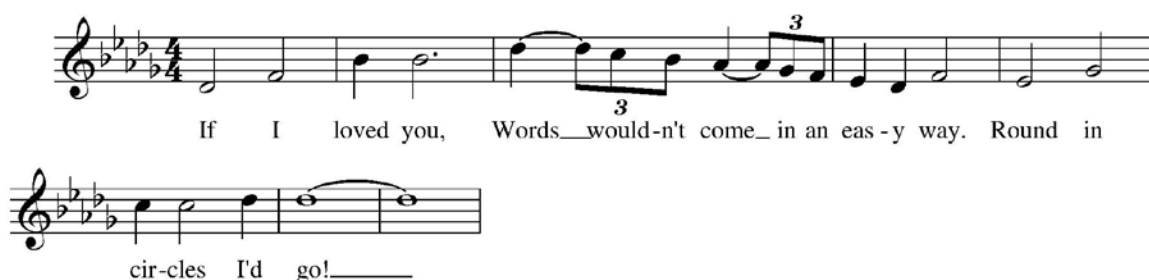
⁴⁸ Claude Debussy, “L’ombre des Arbres,” In *Twelve Songs by Claude Debussy*, edited by Charles Fonteyn Manney (Boston: The Merrymount Press, 1913), 26-27.

⁴⁹ Cole Porter, “Always True to You,” In *The Singers Musical Theater Anthology Volume 1 Mezzo-Soprano/Belter*, edited by Richard Watlers ((Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1987), 189-190.



BUT NOT FOR ME (from “Girl Crazy”)
 Music and Lyrics by GEORGE GERSHWIN and IRA GERSHWIN
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Figure 7. “But Not For Me” m. 52-59 from *Girl Crazy*.⁵⁰



If I Loved You
 from CAROUSEL
 Lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II
 Music by Richard Rodgers
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Figure 8. “If I Loved You” m. 37-44 from *Carousel*.⁵¹

If certain pitches sound better or worse in a performer’s voice, the music theater or classical performer can choose the production that sounds the best or best agrees with the character. These decisions are often made with a voice teacher, a vocal coach, a

⁵⁰ George Gershwin, “But Not For Me,” In *The Singers Musical Theater Anthology Volume 3 Mezzo-Soprano/Belter*, edited by Richard Walters ((Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2000), 139.

⁵¹ Richard Rodgers, “If I Loved You,” In *The Singers Musical Theater Anthology Volume 1 Soprano*, edited by Richard Walters (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1987), 49.

music director, or the director of a show. Amendum provides a glimpse into this world from the music director's perspective:

I do talk a lot about technique. 'Well what if you belt that?' 'Well I don't really love where that sits for you so let's bring it down a step and then let's try that . . .' or 'Let's change the key change to go up a step instead of up a half step.' So part of it is tailoring the music to the singer, and a part of it is getting the singer to give me dramatically what I need in that moment which does require a lot of hands on coaching and coaching that starts to head towards more like technical work.⁵²

Many music theater performers will vary where the belt production takes over in "Always True To You" or "But Not For Me." Knowing how to make each production in a functional and healthy manner allows all singers possibilities for expression. The voice must be free to produce pitches at any number of qualities.

The next major delineation in the two styles is found in registration and range. For the successful singer, registration is determined by artistic factors, the desired timbre, and the tessitura necessitated by the role or song.⁵³ A classical singer is always focused on producing the most beautiful tone with a consistency in presence so as to be heard over an orchestra. The tessitura often determines the *fach* of a classical singer (a system meaning "compartment" in German). This system aims to classify the singer based upon her natural and developed capabilities as well as the demands of roles that fall within specified fachs. The system was developed to protect the singer, allowing her to use her voice to its fullest potential.

⁵² Amendum Interview, 2014.

⁵³ McCoy, *Your Voice: An Inside View*, 148.

There is no designated fach system for the music theater performer. Vocal limitations of individual singers as well as trial and error most often determine the appropriateness of a role. Though a recent study has found the average tessitura of contemporary music theater repertoire to be progressively lower than musicals of thirty years ago,⁵⁴ the ranges have actually gotten larger. The female music theater performer must often switch between registers and qualities, at times within the same song when navigating the wide range.

The female classical singer utilizes chest resonance, the *voce mista* (a head dominant mix), and head resonance. The female music theater performer must be able to sing a majority of her available pitches in chest resonance, chest dominant mix, head dominant mix, belt, belt mix, and head resonance. Typically within the octave of C4-C5 most female music theater performers can sing those pitches in any of the vocal productions listed. Music theater performers are not sopranos or belters; they are sopranos that belt. Note the ending of Maury Yeston's "This Place is Mine" from *Phantom* (Figure 9). In the last fourteen bars, the singer maneuvers from a chest mix, or belt into a head mix or belt mix, and finally ends in full head resonance on a B5!

⁵⁴ Linda Barcan, "Tessitura changes in music theatre repertoire for the soprano voice," *Edith Cowan University Research Online* (2013): 28-42, accessed March 17, 2015, from <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1342&context=ecuworks2013>



This Place Is Mine
from PHANTOM

Words and Music by Maury Yeston

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Figure 9. "This Place is Mine" m. 102-115 from *Phantom*.⁵⁵

A classical singer must round and/or otherwise modify vowels in order to produce the most resonant vocal tract and be heard easily over an orchestra. As a result, the round vowel shapes and qualities have become synonymous with a successful classical tone. Composers are able to write rich orchestrations, or full piano accompaniments, and it is the job of the singer to produce the most resonant quality sound. The music theater performer utilizes amplification through use of microphones, and does not require the same degree of modification in order to project the voice. Modification is vocally necessary at times, specifically at the extremes of the range. The music theater piece

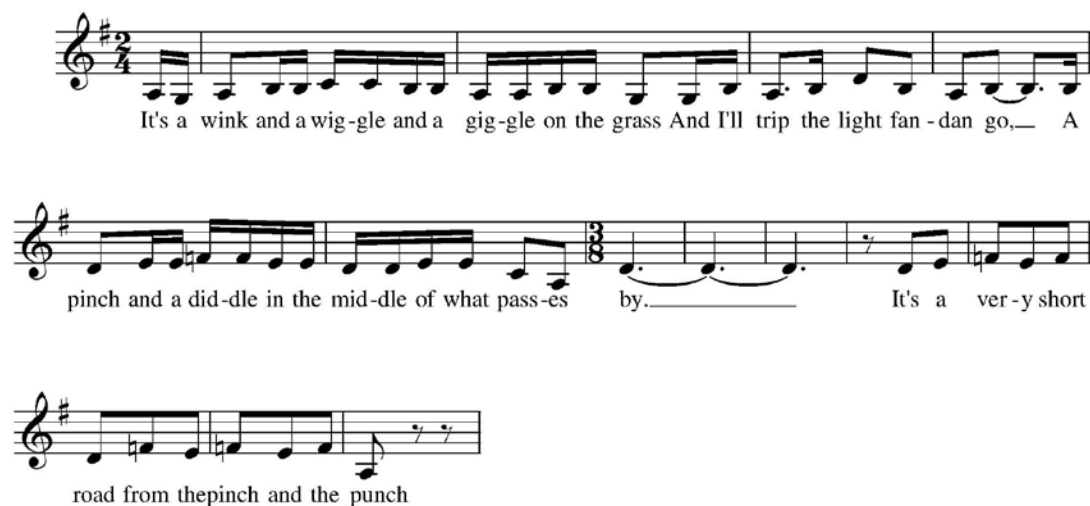
⁵⁵ Maury Yeston, "This Place is Mine," In *The Singers Musical Theatre Anthology Volume 2 Soprano*, Edited by Richard Walters (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1993) 171-172.

must sound like an extension of the dialogue, and so the music theater performer must sound the same in speech and in singing utilizing speech-like vowels.

Consonants are utilized in the same manner for the classical singer as for the music theater performer. For both singers, consonants are formed with the tongue, teeth, and lips, allowing for freedom within these areas as well as the jaw. The consonants provide the boundaries for vowels so that the sounds become text. Text must be understood so the audience can understand the story and the needs of the character.

Stephen Sondheim often writes the lyrics for his own compositions as he is a master at setting text. He chooses his words with extreme care and places every eighth rest, every comma, every notational marking with great precision. Studying scores for these details provides useful information to the singer when exploring intentions of a character. Note the text in Figure 10 and how Sondheim incorporates alliteration and expressive consonants to help define this character.

A classical singer is always aiming for purity and beauty of tone, often above all else. With this in mind, the classical singer aims for a line that is truly legato, with vowels spinning into vowels, and consonants energizing the line, never interrupting. The rounding, elongation, and modification of vowels aid the singer and the result is a constantly spinning and vibrant tone. In everyday English, we do not speak with elongated vowels or a legato quality. Our thoughts are broken up, our vowels have colloquial dialects, and our consonants are formed in a myriad of ways all of which interrupt the vowels but allow us to be understood.



The Miller's Son
 from A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC
 Words and Music by Stephen Sondheim
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Figure 10. "The Miller's Son" m. 20-34 from *A Little Night Music*.⁵⁶

The music theater performer actively sings in a non-legato manner for the best expression of the text. Though on paper each style is notated in the same manner (with the exception of some composers utilizing rests when a breath or thought is necessary), the performer must understand the differences between singing in each style. In Figure 11, Marvin Hamlisch has indicated rests and changes the declamation of repeated text by changing the notation. The music theater performer must know these phrases are to be more spoken than sung, which utilizes a non-legato quality.

⁵⁶ Stephen Sondheim, "The Miller's Son," In *The Singers Musical Theatre Anthology Volume 1 Mezzo-Soprano/Belter*, edited by Richard Walters (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1987), 191-192.



Nothing

from A CHORUS LINE

Music by Marvin Hamlisch

Lyric by Edward Kleban

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Figure 11. “Nothing” m. 21-36 from *A Chorus Line*.⁵⁷

The manner in which we express ourselves vocally is determined by the style of singing we choose to pursue. A classical singer strives for a beautiful tone above all else. However, a classical singer knows that to be successful, she must sing in a style appropriate to the composer and historical era. Purcell is performed differently from Strauss with regards to phrasing, use of rubato, and ornamentation. Next is attention to the character. The expectation must be as clear for classical singers as it is for music theater performers to learn everything possible about an aria or an art song in order to communicate a story to the audience. Though singers may sacrifice clear communication for beauty of tone, the expectation to tell a story and make a connection remains.

⁵⁷ Marvin Hamlisch, “Nothing,” in *The Singers Musical Theatre Anthology Volume 3 Mezzo-Soprano/Belter*, edited by Richard Walters (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2000), 69-70.

The music theater performer places a commitment to the text above all else. The text must be understandable, diction is a necessity, and the vocal production must remain speech-like. The audience must be nearly unable to notice a difference between dialogue and song. The music theater performer must also be aware of compositional and historical styles within performance. The posture, character, and resulting tone employed to sing “Defying Gravity” from *Wicked* is very different than what is seen and heard in “If I Loved You” from *Carousel*.

Music theater and opera are synthesized performance arts. There is more involved than the beauty of the tone, or the look of a dancer, or the story of the text. Though an understanding of the voice and technique provide a foundation upon which a performer may build, an understanding of the style inherent to any genre provides the means for singers to stand out.

What is music theater style? Joe Deer and Rocco Dal Vera explain in their book, *Acting in Musical Theatre: A Comprehensive Course*:

Style is not a fixed idea or set of rules that were established at some point in history, and which we must reference as gospel each time we perform a role from a particular genre. Rather, each style is an evolving performance tradition that simultaneously refers to its origins while mingling with current acting conventions.⁵⁸

Style is bringing the traditions of the past into the present.⁵⁹ When you watch a movie or musical filmed during a specific time period, the actors follow an unspoken set

⁵⁸ Joe Deer and Rocco Dal Vera, *Acting in Musical Theatre: A Comprehensive Course* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 284.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 284.

of rules. These rules were established either through the traditions of theatrical training at the time, or the contemporary values of the everyday person in that time period. What all performers need to bring to their performance is an understanding of the traditions associated with a particular genre, while still pursuing objectives, specifying characters, and creating relationships.⁶⁰ The final decisions regarding the style of a production are ultimately made by the director and music director. Starting from a place of historical accuracy will provide sufficient information regarding the development of the character for any performer.

Vocal style tags, a term favored by Deer and Dal Vera, provide a performer with technical ways to access a character through diction, tonality (the ability to modify your habitual tonal quality), vibrato, phrasing, and ornamentation.⁶¹ Physically, a performer must utilize posture and silhouette, the formality of the movement, fashion and movement, and gestural vocabulary to embrace the style of the piece.⁶² Embodying the movement, posture, fashions, and vocal colors, in combination with an understanding of the relationships between people of the time (relationship to authority figures, between men and women, a person's place in society) are the building blocks to taking on a complete character, all of which affects us vocally.

The most direct way to connect with an audience is through the lyric. A singer must be able to tell a story, and do so convincingly within a set of given parameters regarding time period, place, and circumstance. Bringing a contemporary posture and

⁶⁰ Ibid., 283.

⁶¹ Deer & Dal Vera, *Acting in Musical Theatre*, 300-305.

⁶² Ibid., 306-308.

attitude to a stylized piece such as Lerner & Loewe's *My Fair Lady* will make for a confusing presentation to an audience (and likely to the actor). Actors adapt to styles through vocal and physical means.

These style traditions have evolved over time. The style of the Golden Age musical has changed dramatically since its inception in the 1930s. Deer and Dal Vera explain:

When an actor successfully integrates the traditions associated with a musical or role with more recent conventions, the tradition is revised. Anyone who sees that new interpretation will be affected by it and may even decide that it is the new 'right way' to perform the material. This evolution is inevitable and necessary for these older shows to maintain relevance for new audiences.⁶³

Understanding how the voice works and what foundational elements exist in both classical singing and music theater performance is the first step for the singer looking to cross over. The classical singer must commit herself to the exploration of character, style, and nuance in a vastly different musical world in order to be successful in music theater. A brief overview of acting for the singer can in no way replicate or replace coursework in acting techniques, or the experience of working with, and learning from, a director or other actors. It can provide a place from which to begin for any singer who wishes to strengthen her acting abilities.

Acting is expressing the artist's personal truth through the lens of a role.⁶⁴ This statement is vague enough to render many meaningful interpretations. The key element

⁶³ Ibid., 285.

⁶⁴ Kevin Robison, *The Actor Sings: Discovering a Musical Voice for the Stage* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 1.

is personal truth. If making oneself emotionally available and vulnerable in front of another person sounds like an insurmountable task, think again. Being preoccupied with your vocal technique is common, but disconnects you from your goal of connecting with the audience. Holding back emotionally can create unwanted tension in the voice, creating the opposite result of that which the singer may fear.⁶⁵

Lee describes the technique of a singer differently. He feels that the only technique a singer has is what she does on stage. “What you do in the practice room is nice, but if you’re not doing it when you need it then it’s not technique.”⁶⁶ A singer must practice the acting separate from the singing; she eventually works both into the performance technique leaving all of the work behind her to present the most effortless performance possible.

A successful performer must analyze the text of a song, or better yet, an entire show to create the strongest character and the most truthful presentation. Cimmet teaches people to pay attention to rhyme, rhythm, meter, alliteration, vocabulary, and any other possible clues present within the text.⁶⁷ When due diligence has been served to the text, the performer must then look to the music. The music provides clues about mood, place, changes in emotion, tactic, memories, and countless otheractable moments.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 18

⁶⁶ Lee Interview, 2014.

⁶⁷ Cimmet Interview, 2014.

Composers paid careful attention to what music went with each respective character. A style can reveal status; voice type can reveal the nature of a character.⁶⁸ A prime example of this is in Lerner & Loewe's *My Fair Lady*, wherein Eliza Doolittle begins as a mix or belt production character, singing jovial songs about her dreams of a warm fire and chocolate. After her social transformation with the help of Henry Higgins, Eliza is a soprano singing with more declamation, straighter rhythms, and a wider range.

Just as the singing actor asks herself "What do I want?" when analyzing the text, the singer must look at the music and ask herself "Why did the composer write a quarter note the first time through, and a fermata the second time through?" "Why does the composer change the shape of the melody for the third iteration of this phrase?" "Why did the composer modulate a half step higher?" Answering these questions with action-driven emotions allows the singer to connect to the music. With an understanding of the musical elements, and an analysis of the text, the singer can successfully bring a piece of music to life and create a connection with an audience. As Deer & Dal Vera point out: "the development of a character is a process. Research, explore, fantasize, dream about and play with your characters."⁶⁹

The following chapter explores assimilating the information explored thus far regarding how a classical singer can build upon what she knows in order to successfully sing music theater repertoire. Using the genres of the megamusical and the 21st century

⁶⁸ Deer & Dal Vera, *Acting in Musical Theatre*, 71-72.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 162.

musical, I will define the stylistic parameters of each genre and provide necessary information for a classical singer to successfully perform repertoire in each style.

CHAPTER IV

MUSIC THEATER STYLE

For the classical singer looking to explore music theater repertoire, beginning with the early musicals of the “Golden Age” from around 1940-1970 can provide plenty of repertoire. This chapter focuses on two genres of music theater that may appear less accessible to the classically trained singer, discussing means by which a singer can successfully perform within these genres. Focusing on the megamusical and the 21st century musical provides a look at genres of music theater that are relevant today. The megamusical has sustained a level of visibility and popularity that makes it a popular booking choice for theater companies all around the country, and worldwide. The 21st century musical provides a look at contemporary trends in music theater. These genres can also call upon a wider variety of vocal productions and provide a place from which to begin connecting the vocal demands from chapter two with the stylistic demands from chapter three.

The Megamusical

What is a megamusical? It has gone by many names including the “through-composed popular opera,” “popera,” “spectacle show,” “blockbuster musical” or “extravaganza.”^{70,71} All of these titles describe the phenomenon of the sung-through

⁷⁰ William A. Everett and Paul Prece, “The megamusical: the creation, internationalization and impact of a genre,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 250.

musical wherein elements other than the music are as important, including set design, choreography, and special effects.⁷² Jessica Sternfeld describes the megamusical as “a kind of musical theater that rose to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s and that remains a dominant force on Broadway today.”

The components of a megamusical are found within the show itself and from the surrounding context.⁷³ Sternfeld describes the elements that make up a megamusical:

(A megamusical includes a) grand plot from a [sic] historical era, high emotions, singing and music throughout, and impressive sets. It opens with massive publicity, which usually leads to millions of dollars in advance sales. Marketing strategies provide a recognizable logo or image, theme song, and catch phrase. Successful (re-) productions spring up all over the world. It runs for years, perhaps decades, becoming a fixture of our cultural landscape.⁷⁴

Some of the longest running shows in the world are from the megamusical genre. Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *The Phantom of the Opera* opened on September 27, 1986 at Her Majesty’s Theatre in London, and on January 9, 1988 at the Majestic Theatre on Broadway. The show is still running as of the completion of this document, making it Broadway’s longest running musical.⁷⁵ Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil’s *Les Misérables* opened in London at the Barbican Theatre on October 8, 1985 and after 8,372 performances, holds the distinction of being the longest-running musical in the

⁷¹ Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 1.

⁷² Prece & Everett, “The megamusical,” 250.

⁷³ Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁵ “The Show: Facts and Figures,” *The Phantom of the Opera*, 2015, accessed December 17, 2014, <http://www.thephantomoftheopera.com/new-york>

West End.⁷⁶ *Les Misérables* opened in New York on March 12, 1987, closed on May 18, 2003, and is currently in its second revival on Broadway, with no scheduled closing date, also as of the completion of this document.

The marketing and publicity are what I believe truly sets the megamusical apart from other musical genres. Early music theater productions featured a sung-through score, or a gorgeous set, but the marketing achieved by producer Cameron Mackintosh on three of the shows he produced (*Cats*, *Les Misérables*, and *The Phantom of the Opera*) have left the most lasting impact on the theatrical world. Each show has an easily recognizable logo. For *Cats*, two green eyes against a black background with silhouetted dancers for pupils; *The Phantom of the Opera* features a lone white masquerade mask with a red rose against a black background; *Les Misérables*, a drawing of a small girl wearing a beret. Sternfeld explains the considerable amounts of marketing:

These recognizable images became fodder for vast amounts of merchandising: coffee mugs, T-shirts, books, refrigerator magnets, perfume, jewelry, key chains, posters, music boxes, snow globes. Items were available not only in the theater lobby but in souvenir shops and department stores . . . Commercial began to run long before opening day, so that by the time the show arrived, anticipation had built up.⁷⁷

The grandness described by Sternfeld is echoed by Paul Prece and William Everett in the *Cambridge Companion to the Broadway Musical*. They compare the megamusical to nineteenth-century French grand opera describing it as follows: “In both megamusicals and French grand opera, striking things happen amidst imaginative

⁷⁶ Prece & Everett, “The megamusical,” 253.

⁷⁷ Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 78.

surroundings. Frequently, French grand operas were set against war backgrounds; likewise, *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon*, and *Martin Guerre* all have war settings.”⁷⁸

In the 1970s and 1980s, electronic instruments were becoming more prevalent in the pit orchestras both on and off Broadway. After *Hair* opened on Broadway in 1968 featuring electric guitars, other musicals began to include more modern sounds often heard in popular music such as synthesizers. What was once an electronically unamplified performance art quickly developed into an amplified art after the ‘new’ technology of microphones became more readily accessible in the 1960s. Before the microphones became more sophisticated, singers relied upon their vocal abilities to project to the back of a room in order to be heard. Because of this technology, composers felt freer to write fuller orchestrations, including electronically amplified guitars and keyboards, and singers became less reliant upon natural means of projection. The amplification that lead to the electronic pit orchestras has also lead to the development of the current music theater sound, and ultimately the high belt heard in more contemporary musicals.

This is not to say that music theater performers need not sing with a sense of resonance. As was discussed in chapter two, successful music theater performers must find a sense of resonance in their singing because there must be a sound for the microphone to amplify. The same holds true for diction. The microphone cannot enhance a sound that was never properly produced. In short, a singer must sing with a sense of resonance and articulation in order for the sound engineer to be able to do his or

⁷⁸ Prece & Everett, “The megamusical,” 250-251.

her job of balancing the singer with the orchestra. Amplification is a necessary facet of both genres of music theater discussed here. The demands on the singer, tessitura of the roles, and use of amplified instruments in the pit make microphones a necessity for the vocal health and longevity of the music theater performer.

Within the genre of the megamusical, certain roles may require a more classical vocal approach than others. In both *Les Misérables* and *The Phantom of the Opera*, composers utilize a classical vocal quality for numerous roles within the show. In *Les Misérables*, Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil write the part of Cosette as a lyric soprano, who sings up to a B5 and later a C6, and the role of Marius as a lyric tenor, who must often sing in and above the passaggio. Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* features a lyric soprano in the role of Christine Daaé who sings in a more operatic tessitura, and requires an E6. Another more dramatic soprano is found in the role of Carlotta Giudicelli, who has moments of coloratura, and also sings up to E6.

Though these roles lend themselves to a more classical vocal approach, they are not meant to be sung completely in an operatic quality—rounding vowels utilizing modification as necessary, lower laryngeal position, rich vibrato on every pitch, a sense of legato through every sound, accessing the singer's formant—rather the roles lend themselves to what are considered classical vocal techniques. At their core, they are still strongly within the realm of music theater. The text must always be intelligible and once in the middle range vowels become more speech-like.

Some roles within the genre of the megamusical lie completely outside of a classical vocal approach. In *Les Misérables*, the role of Eponine is considered a belter.

Her song in Act II, “On My Own,” reflecting on her life without Marius, travels throughout the vocal range, with the climax on a TA dominant C5. This role cannot be approached with a classical vocalism, as Eponine is a more earthy character. She grew up essentially on the streets, and has learned to fend for herself from a very early age. The composers reflect this in her singing. Cosette, on the other hand, lived her early years abused by the innkeeper and his wife who were paid to take care of her. Her first song as a young girl, “Castle on a Cloud,” is performed with a speech like production, utilizing a chest resonant dominant sound. When we meet Cosette nine years later, she has since grown up as a woman of some means as the adopted daughter of the protagonist, Jean Valjean. The rest of Cosette’s vocal writing is in a classical nature, as she sings lyrically through the soprano up to C6. Adult Cosette still necessitates a music theater sound at other points in the show, for example the times when she speaks with her father.

Looking beyond the vocal aspects of the megamusical style, a brief mention of phrasing is necessary. Self-indulgent phrasing is not typical of the megamusical style, and back-phrasing (intentionally singing ahead or behind the beat for dramatic effect) should be nearly non-existent. With a through-composed work as is often seen in the megamusical, the orchestra is playing for most of the show and therefore a conductor cannot continually hold back multiple players for the wants of one singer. Furthermore, back phrasing is a style more associated with jazz and popular song, and the megamusical is still performed in a traditional musical manner.

From the British invasion of megamusicals singers have roles such as Cosette, Christine Daaé, and Carlotta as obvious bridges between the classical mode of vocal production and the music theater. As the megamusical progressed and developed, shows such as Disney's *The Lion King*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and Ahrens and Flaherty's *Ragtime* arrived on Broadway. The role of Belle in *Beauty and the Beast* contains elements of classical vocalisms mostly in that she does not often belt. Belle does utilize the mix throughout most of her singing but she is in many ways a soprano.

Ragtime features roles that also provide a bridge to a classical vocal production. The role of Mother was premiered by Marin Mazzie and later revived by Christianne Noll, both of whom studied classical music (Western Michigan University and Carnegie Mellon, respectively) before working on Broadway. The role of Sarah was premiered by Audra MacDonald, a Juilliard graduate. Each role utilizes classical vocalisms as well as music theater vocalisms and can successfully be performed by someone with a classical background as these Tony nominated actresses have proven.

Rock music had a massive impact on the popular culture, eventually finding its way onto Broadway where rock and pop elements merged with the traditional musical, forming a modified Broadway-rock-pop style.⁷⁹ The megamusicals began incorporating the rock and pop elements first heard in *Hair*. Amplified instruments, pop vocal mechanisms, and hints of pop, country, or blues influences became a part of the megamusical style. The integration of musical styles from the radio paved the way for the rock musical, and the current trends of the 21st century musical.

⁷⁹ Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 94.

The 21st Century Musical

Much has changed between the 1980s and the 21st century when a new wave of music theater emerged. What was thought of by music theater traditionalists as a passing fad has shown itself to be the next development in the music theater. The pop/rock musical style seen in most shows of the 21st century utilizes orchestrations, vocalisms, and music that reflect the popular music of the time (that is, the music one would hear on the 'Top 40' – the forty most popular songs of a given time period).⁸⁰

The large umbrella of the 21st century musical includes musicals that imitate styles of songs heard on the radio, that make use of songs directly from the radio, that imitate styles of popular songs of the past, and that utilize the folk, country, R&B, hip hop, and Latino elements of popular songs. For example, the musical *Hairspray* features original music written in the style of the early 1960s, representing that time period. *Rock of Ages* makes use of songs written in the 1980s. The vocal ranges are climbing higher, and more demands are being placed on the singers to sound like the produced and amplified singers from the recorded albums.

As styles of music heard on the radio today range innumerable, so too do the subsets of 21st century musicals. Until music theater develops away from the popular music trend and an objective ear can categorize the shows that stand the test of time, the numerous styles of this genre will remain. Deer and Dal Vera divide 21st century musicals into subsets by popular genre, including hard rock, revues and jukebox

⁸⁰ *Dictionary.com*, s.v. "Top 40," accessed March 21, 2015, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/top+40>

musicals, pastiche musicals, Motown/R&B, and soft rock/pop musicals.⁸¹ This can make categorizing the subgenres difficult. Taking a vocal approach, Robert Edwin categorizes all musicals into four categories: traditional legit, contemporary legit, traditional belt, and contemporary belt.⁸² Edwin writes:

Legit is Broadway shorthand for “legitimate,” which refers to singing in a classical-like style. Legit can be further divided into traditional legit and contemporary legit. Traditional legit favors a sound that is decidedly classical in nature and is heard in many of the pre-1960s musicals. Contemporary legit, on the other hand, is less formal and more speech-like in sound. It can maintain some of the classical requirements such as vibrato from onset to release, *chiaroscuro*, and *sostenuto*, but can also include pop and rock-influenced sounds.⁸³

Edwin further defines what makes a traditional or contemporary belt. The traditional belt predates rock ‘n’ roll, and does not feature many riffs (contemporary ornamentations). The tone is fuller and sung with a more legato line, similar to the traditional legit. This quality is specifically a chest dominant sound, wherein the chest voice is brought up as high as it can go, before allowing any music theater mix to pervade the sound. This tonal quality came about from the early belters like Ethel Merman and Patti Lupone who had to be heard in an unamplified space singing in a range that did not lend itself to carrying power in a classical production.

In the contemporary belt, melismatic runs, slides, slurs, growls, shrieks, screams, and assorted noises found in the popular styles of rock, pop, rhythm and blues, jazz and

⁸¹ Deer & Dal Vera, *Acting in Musical Theatre*, 359.

⁸² Robert Edwin, “A Broader Broadway,” *Journal of Singing* 59, no. 5 (May 2003): 431-32.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 431-432.

gospel may be heard.⁸⁴ Deer and Dal Vera state “Rock music favors vocal colors that are rawer [sic], and emotionally and psychologically more violent, than in earlier styles and include musicalized screaming and wailing.”⁸⁵ It is essential that the teacher of this style and the singer remain aware of the vocal limitations of the individual singer as well as the degree to which some of these sounds are created through the amplification/enhancement/editing of the recording studio.

David Sisco and Laura Josepher categorize specifically 21st century musicals by vocal demands and musical style into the following categories: legit shows, contemporary mix, pop/rock (original score), pop/rock (jukebox), world music, miscellaneous (legit jukebox, legit review)⁸⁶. Edwin’s categories work for a broad spectrum of music theater roles and provide a narrower scope for the classical singer with little to no exposure to this genre. Considering his list was created when the century was only three years old, Sisco and Josepher’s listing creates a more cohesive unit of 21st century musicals. Each system provides useful information to the classical singer looking to sing in any of these subgenres. With an understanding of the vocal demands in any given show, a classically trained singer can better prepare for a role in any genre of musical; the same way one would understand the vocal demands of an opera prior to learning a role.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Deer & Dal Vera, *Acting in Musical Theatre*, 354.

⁸⁶ David Sisco and Laura Josepher, “A ‘Complete’ List of Contemporary Musicals: 2000-2015,” *Contemporary Musical Theatre* (blog), April 13, 2012, accessed November 8, 2014, from <https://contemporarymusicaltheatre.wordpress.com/2012/04/13/a-complete-list-of-contemporary-musicals-2000-2012/>

There are certain roles that require a classical or more CT dominant approach to the vocal production. Edwin would categorize these as contemporary legit roles. Sisco and Josepher might label these shows as legit or contemporary mix. For the purposes of this paper, these are roles that provide a means for the classically trained female to explore 21st century musicals.

The Sherman Brothers' *Mary Poppins* incorporates the Disney ideal of Mary Poppins as a soprano who must also mix or belt utilizing a range of G3 flat to C6. This production also includes a character not seen in the Disney movie: Miss Andrew, a character actress who must also have soprano capabilities singing from G3 flat to F5. A spectacular soprano duet for the pair appears in Act II.

Jason Robert Brown's most recent musical, *The Bridges of Madison County*, premiered with Kelli O'Hara in the lead role. O'Hara recently completed a production of *The Merry Widow* at the Metropolitan Opera House and has also played Nellie Forbush in Rodgers & Hammerstein's *South Pacific*. O'Hara is a prime example of classical technique married with music theater technique and the ability to successfully cross between the genres.

Other recent roles that utilize a CT dominant production include Margaret Johnson and Clara Johnson in Adam Guettel's *The Light in the Piazza* utilizing a range from A3 to G5 and A3 to A5 respectively. Hope Cladwell from Mark Hollmann's *Urinetown* sings from A3 to A5. The 2014 Tony winner for Best Musical was Steven Lutvak's *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* also featuring two lyric sopranos necessitating a wide range. Phoebe D'Ysquith sings from A3 to E6 and Sibela Hallward

from F3 sharp to G5. Singers of 21st century music theater repertoire require wide ranges with strong middle voices. The ranges continue to grow wider as the tessitura continues to move lower.⁸⁷

Though each subgenre will have specific parameters regarding style and performance practice, in general amplified singers and amplified pit orchestras have become standard. Vocal tessituras are much lower for females and much higher for males, placing both sexes in similar vocal tessituras. However, the range of many female roles is continually getting wider, with expectations to belt up to a D5, E5, or even F5. Phrasing is also uniformly different from what was the practice of earlier musicals. Back phrasing, freeing the text from the notated rhythms, stronger accents on off beats, and creating melodic improvisations on the basic melody are all typical phrasing tactics.⁸⁸

As 21st century musicals are the most current musicals being written and produced, a wide range of possible vocal styles exist within the genre. The vocalisms and ornamentations utilized in *Legally Blonde, the Musical*, drawing from musical styles of the early 2000s are different from the tone and vocalisms used in *Rock of Ages*, a more alternative and hard rock musical drawing from styles of the 1980s. The successful performer must open her ears to the possibilities of sounds in each subgenre. However, she must never imitate. She must always seek to find her individual sound within the desired aesthetic. This may mean that not every subgenre of the 21st century musical is appropriate for every singer. The same is true of operas yet for the classical singer this

⁸⁷ Barcan, "Tessitura changes," 42.

⁸⁸ Deer & Dal Vera, *Acting in Musical Theatre*, 357.

general idea is more accepted. Without a designated fach system in the music theater world, the singer must be her own advocate for what styles are best suited to her abilities.

The classical singer looking to perform in a 21st century musical must also be flexible with musical structure. If approached from the standpoint of the music first, the classically trained singer will likely not be very successful in this genre. The connection to the lyric and development of a character is intrinsic to the success of any performer in any genre. Performers of music theater must always look to the lyric as a means of discovering the most appropriate use of voice in a given song, and allow the music to support that choice.

CHAPTER V

REPERTOIRE RECOMMENDATIONS

For singers who have studied primarily classical music, entering the world of another genre (in this case music theater) can be a daunting task when the singer does not know from whence to begin. Repertoire that lies stylistically between the classical and music theater genres provides an introduction to aspects of the newer technique, while still remaining within the familiar surroundings of the known style. Within this repertoire lie numerous avenues available to the singer offering a number of factors to be considered. Does the singer want to focus on the theatrical aspect of performance while in a classically based technique? Does she want to explore the speech-like qualities of music theater repertoire, but stay within the world of classical music? Does she want to dive fully into a character of the music theater canon that utilizes more classical vocalisms than may be seen on the contemporary stage? Supplementary repertoire exists with varying amounts of classical qualities, theatrical qualities, and use of a music theater technique. The singer must first consider from which angle to approach the new technique, then find the repertoire to suit that approach. This chapter seeks to identify composers whose repertoire fit these descriptions and offer a resource for the classical singer and teacher looking to bridge the styles in the exploration of music theater technique.

The influence of popular music on the classical world is more prevalent than before, especially in the genre of the American art song. Some composers write in a popular music style, such as William Bolcom's *Cabaret Songs*. Others write art song and incorporate popular music ideas, such as Ricky Ian Gordon's *Coyotes*. American art song and popular American music are beginning to blend, and this repertoire provides a bridge for the classical singer looking to sing music theater repertoire. The composers and repertoire are ordered by increasing elements of music theater style, beginning with composers of art song more firmly rooted within classical composition, and progressing to composers of songs more closely associated with music theater composition.

Kurt Weill felt the worlds of American music theater and American opera held the possibility to be the same in many ways. He saw America as a place not burdened with older operatic traditions, yet with a developing individual style as seen on Broadway;⁸⁹ if composers would embrace their own home-grown style, the American theater could become truly American:

It has been my opinion for a long time that the Broadway stage can become an important outlet for the American composer and might even become the birthplace of a genuine American "musical theatre" or, if you wish, an American opera . . . I never could see any reason why the "educated" (not to say "serious") composer should not be able to reach all available markets with his music, and I have always believed that opera should be a part of the living theatre of our time. Broadway is today one of the great theatre centers of the world. It has all the technical and intellectual equipment for a serious musical theatre.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Kurt Weill, "The Future of Opera in America," *Modern Music: A Quarterly Review* 14, no. 4 (1937): 183.

⁹⁰ Kurt Weill, "Broadway, Composers, and the Musical Theatre," *Music Journal* 5, no. 5 (1947): 15.

This outlook provides a good starting point for the classically trained singer as Weill wrote classical music with an eye for the theatrical point of view. His opera *Street Scene* blends song, dialogue, and drama. This opera is an approachable starting point for the classical singer as it includes pieces more classical in nature and will require a similar vocalism to be performed successfully.

Weill also made a name for himself in the worlds of music theater, art song, and cabaret (though he never specifically wrote for the cabaret). His songs appear in collections of Golden Age Standards, solo anthologies, and art song. These pieces work as a bridge because they may be sung in a classical vocalism, allowing the singer to rely upon her learned technique, while also introducing the focus of a character and the story. At the same time, his pieces may be approached from a theatrical standpoint, and the singer may work towards the speech-like quality and even moments of TA dominant production.

Benjamin Britten, known for his operas and *War Requiem*, has a set of Cabaret Songs, relatively unknown until published together in 1980. The pieces were not written as a cohesive set, however, one may perform them as a group or as individual songs. The full set incorporates a wide vocal range for the singer (one piece, “Johnny,” spans from F3 to C6) as well as a wide range of emotions including curiosity, unbound excitement, devotional love, and absolute despair. These pieces offer a chance to explore character and text clarity while still being altogether classical.

William Bolcom’s *Cabaret Songs* provide another avenue into exploring a newer vocalism or connection to a character. Each is theatrically conceived, though written in a

very sophisticated manner rendering strong musicianship skills from both singer and pianist. The songs combine a contemporary harmonic language with cabaret and American musical style incorporating modern classical dissonances with ragtime, jazz, and pop syncopations.⁹¹ The four collections include a variety of popular styles, but the singer may explore different uses of vocalism and still be successful in performance.

Ricky Ian Gordon's vocal writings span art song, opera, and music theater. His music "combines classical compositional techniques with cabaret influences to create stunning vocal works."⁹² His music is often performed by classical and music theater singers alike. When sung by classical singers, Gordon's songs seem like art songs. When performed by stage and cabaret singers, the songs sound like music theater.⁹³ As with the songs of Kurt Weill, a singer may take multiple approaches to Gordon's songs and still have a successful performance should she choose to utilize a classical or a music theater tone.

Ben Moore is a composer who lives comfortably in both the classical and music theater genre. Moore's compositions include cabaret and theater songs, classical art songs, and opera parodies.⁹⁴ With his style spanning the classical and theatrical worlds, Moore's songs are approachable for a variety of singers. His opera parodies were written for classically trained singers, and therefore provide another avenue to maintain a

⁹¹ Eric. R. Bronner "New 'Standards' for Singers: The Next Generation of Great American Songbook Writers," *Journal of Singing* 63, no. 4 (March/April 2007): 457-62.

⁹² Ibid., 457-462.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ben Moore, "Compositions," Ben Moore, Composer, accessed February 27, 2015, <http://www.mooreart.com/music/compositions>

classical vocalism while exploring character and connection to text. The cabaret and theater songs, however, must be presented with a music theater speech-like tone along with the connection to the character. Moore explains: “I just love really good singers, especially those who can get across the words as well as have a beautiful sound, but who are not afraid of making a less beautiful sound if it helps the drama.”⁹⁵

David Sisco provides a glimpse into the world of a prominently music theater composer who has also successfully published art songs and opera. Sisco received widespread recognition for his *Missed Connections*, a song cycle with lyrics from Craigslist, which won the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) 2010 Art Song Composition Award. Currently, Sisco is rooted in the world of music theater and is gaining recognition as a composer in the genre. His music from both genres focuses on text and though some settings are rather difficult and require a great deal from the singer and pianist, his music is also theatrical in nature and requires a commitment to the character and the text.

Golden age musicals provide another avenue for the classically trained singer looking to explore different vocalisms. Composers of music theater wrote with a variety of voices in mind, and for some composers the classical singer produced the desired sound. The musicals of Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lerner and Leowe, Meredith Willson, Leonard Bernstein, and Stephen Sondheim (to name only a few) contain songs suitable for the classically trained singer who wants to begin exploring music theater repertoire. Many roles within the golden age musicals were written for, and performed

⁹⁵ Ben Moore, interviewed by Jeeyoung Park, April 26, 2006.

by, classically trained singers. It is only within the last fifty years that the vocalism required for a music theater performer has developed into a substantially different quality.

Roles that live primarily in a CT dominant production will provide means for a connection for the classically trained singer. Specific roles with this quality from the golden age include Laurie from *Oklahoma!*, Julie Jordon from *Carousel*, and Maria VonTrapp from *The Sound of Music*, all written by Rodgers and Hammerstein. Lerner and Loewe provide another group of characters in Fiona MacLaren from *Brigadoon*, and Guenevere from *Camelot*. Frank Loesser's *Guys and Dolls* features Sarah Brown. From other composers, look to roles such as Marian Paroo from Meredith Willson's *The Music Man*, Philia from Sondheim's *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and Maria from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*. These are but a few of the numerous roles conceived for a soprano. The classically trained singer will find repertoire from these roles to be vocally accessible, and can then begin to explore connecting to the text and other aspects of the music theater quality.

Looking to the megamusical genre, roles such as Christine Daaé or Carlotta Giudicelli from Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera*, Cosette from Schönberg's *Les Misérables* and Mother from Ahrens and Flaherty's *Ragtime* each require a singer with access to a CT dominant production. Each of these characters also needs access to a TA dominant production, as well as the speech-like quality required of music theater performers.

Though the rock musical has gained a firm place within the contemporary music theater, composers still utilize the soprano sound in these and other contemporary shows. Some more recent roles that utilize a CT dominant production include Margaret Johnson in Adam Guettel's *The Light in the Piazza*, Lily in Lucy Simon's *The Secret Garden*, Hope Cladwell from Mark Hollmann's *Urinetown*, and Francesca Johnson from Jason Robert Brown's *The Bridges of Madison County*. Conceived for a soprano, but also with more contemporary vocalisms in mind, the classically trained singer may explore these roles for further exploration of the music theater technique.

These composers and roles provide a glimpse of possible avenues for the classical singer looking to explore music theater repertoire and technique. Finding the best path is as individual as the singer.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUDING REMARKS

A solid foundation in vocal technique, regardless of genre, will serve any singer. The classical singer must be willing to open herself up to the full range of vocal possibilities if she aims to explore a genre like music theater. Through defining and describing the objective parameters by which classical singers are measured, I developed a set of objective parameters by which the music theater performer may be measured. This provides not only a foundation for the classically trained singer but a means of comparison for commonalities between the techniques, and where these techniques begin to diverge. The areas of alignment, respiration, support, and phonation are all very similar and in many ways identical between the two genres. Resonance, registration, range, articulation, and expression/style are the areas of greatest difference. The classical singer may utilize many of the same techniques from her classical singing in her music theater singing. She will even initiate sound in the same manner. Success lies in adapting the differences in technique for resonance, registration, articulation, and expression/style.

A successful music theater performer utilizes a flexible laryngeal position, being able to raise or lower the larynx or soft palate as well as adjust the shape of the pharynx to achieve the desired tone. The music theater performer may sacrifice a classical

singer's perception of resonance to achieve the speech-like quality, but never at the expense of her vocal health.

Though style appears to be a big difference between the two genres, there exist many similarities. The classical singer must be able to tell a story and connect to her text and character even in a foreign language. With the HD MET Broadcasts, singers are expected to more accurately depict a character than even twenty years ago. In the music theater genre, directors often hired actors who could sing, until Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical *Oklahoma!* when the writers specifically hired singers who could act. The importance of acting and connecting with a character has always been relevant to music theater. For the classically trained singer, if she has always studied the character, the story, the background, and the music, she will find an easy transition into music theater. If not, this will remain an area for further study.

The megamusical and the 21st century musical each provide roles and repertoire for the classical singer to begin synthesizing the vocal styles with the objectives and physicality of a character. The megamusical is a more direct bridge between the genres, whereas the 21st century musical explores different types of vocalisms not often employed by a classical singer. The soprano role is still found in certain contemporary musicals, but the vocalism will always be a blend of a classical vocal production with the ideals and values of a music theater performance.

For singers who have studied primarily classical music, entering the world of another genre (in this case music theater) can be a daunting task when the singer does not know from whence to begin. Exploring the many avenues between the two genres

provide plenty of repertoire for the classically trained singer. The singer is more able to start from a place of comfort, be it with the vocalism or the character, and work her way towards the newer technique required of music theater. Through this exploration, singers may find certain repertoire that better suits her voice. Just as a classical singer utilizes the parameters of the established *fach* system when choosing classical repertoire, so too must a music theater performer learn her own vocal limitations within the genre. With the help and guidance of an experienced vocal coach or teacher, the music theater performer can explore myriads of styles within the repertoire to learn what suits her best.

The classically trained female can successfully perform music theater repertoire. By combining her established foundation in classical technique with the adjustments necessary for a music theater technique, she can be vocally successful in any genre.

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APPENDIX A

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Bridget Moriarty
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VIA EMAIL: *bridget.m.moriarty@gmail.com*

March 23, 2015

Bridget Moriarty
3702 Cotswold Ter. Unit 3C
Greensboro, NC 27410

RE: "Defying Gravity" by Stephen Schwartz: 14 measures
"If I Loved You" by Oscar Hammerstein II and Richard Rodgers: 8 measures
"The Miller's Son" by Stephen Sondheim: 15 measures
"Nothing" by Marvin Hamlisch and Edward Kleban: 16 measures
"This Place Is Mine" by Maury Yeston: 14 measures

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